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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 ABUJA 002397

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E.O. 12958: DECL: 06/25/2016

TAGS: [KNNP](#) [ENRG](#) [PARM](#) [PTER](#) [TRGY](#) [PGOV](#) [NI](#)

SUBJECT: NIGERIA: USG PROVIDES SEARCH AND SECURE TRAINING AND EQUIPMENT ON RADIOACTIVE MATERIALS

REF: A. ABUJA 01121

Classified By: Acting Economic Counselor Anthony Fernandes for Reasons 1.4 (B & D)

¶1. (C) Summary: U.S. experts from the United States Department of Energy's (DOE) Global Threats Reduction Initiative (GTRI), in collaboration with the Nigerian Nuclear Regulatory Authority (NNRA), provided training on search and secure techniques for radioactive materials and the use of radiation detection equipment to a cross section of 23 officials from Nigerian agencies responsible for nuclear safety and security during November 17-22. The Ambassador donated DOE radiation detection equipment (worth \$100,000) to the NNRA and encouraged participants to use their training and the donated equipment to secure radioactive materials in the country. The Director General of the NNRA, Professor Shemseeden Elegeba, expressed the Government of Nigeria's (GON) appreciation for the technical assistance, acknowledged that Nigeria has a nascent nuclear program for peaceful purposes, and requested continued U.S. assistance and collaborations.

End Summary.

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NNRA Mandate

¶2. (C) The NNRA was created in 1998 and started operation in May 2001 with the mandate to regulate the safety and security of radiation sources, nuclear materials, and the physical protection of nuclear installations. According to Elegeba, radioactive materials are used in the following sectors -- petroleum, mining, manufacturing, construction, agriculture and water resources, health, and research. The radioactive materials in the country were imported mainly from the U.S., Great Britain, France, Germany, Russia, China, South Africa, and South Korea.

¶3. (C) The NNRA does not have a complete inventory of radioactive sources in the country, largely because importation of such materials was not regulated prior to the NNRA's formation. To better manage the inventory, the NNRA has introduced a three-tiered classification system that categorizes radioactive sources depending on their time of arrival into the country, use status, and custody:

-- Status A - comprise sources imported after May 2001 and are therefore under full regulatory authority of the NNRA.

-- Status B (legacy sources) - comprise sources imported before May 2001, which are not currently in use and are in the custody of their

original owners.

-- Status C (orphaned sources) - comprise sources imported before May 2001, which are not currently in use and their owners and locations are unknown.

Orphaned Sources (Status C) the Biggest Worries

¶ 14. (C) According to the NNRA, Status C sources are the main concerns as there is no record of them, are unsecured, pose serious health and safety risks, and could fall into the wrong hands. Although it has tried to compile a database on Status C sources by soliciting information from known source countries, the NNRA claims that the response it has received has not been uniformly positive. Apart from poor records, the NNRA lacks sufficient man power and equipment to conduct a thorough search and rescue of orphaned sources at suspected sites. The NNRA is optimistic that the U.S. training and the donated detection equipment will increase its search and rescues of orphaned sources at suspected sites. The next challenge for the NNRA is the safe disposal of the recovered sources; however, it appears that the NNRA has no such plan at the moment. (Comment: ESTHOFF has encouraged the NNRA to provide a list of suspected orphaned and legacy sources for possible U.S. assistance for their recovery and safe disposal. End Comment)

The Oil Sector Biggest User of Radioactive Materials

¶ 15. (C) Elegeba described the use of known sources (Status A) in the petroleum sector as an area that needs his agency's constant

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attention. He noted the lack of clearly delineated responsibilities between oil producers and the service companies that are contracted by the former for the handling, transportation, and storage of radioactive sources. The service companies are licensed by the GON to import and use radioactive sources on the premises and facilities of the oil producing companies while the oil producing companies are not. There have been reports of the handling of radioactive sources by unlicensed personnel and or the temporary storage of sources at unlicensed facilities, according to Elegeba. He pointed out that transportation of radioactive sources over water and road is often conducted by unlicensed third parties not under the direct control of either the oil producing or service companies. The lack of clear responsibilities among the various businesses is a weak link in the safe handling of radioactive materials and a source of past incidents and accidents that need their constant attention reported Elegeba. To overcome this problem, the NNRA has started engaging the oil producers, the service companies and the transporters and has instituted guidelines clearly delineating responsibilities. However, when asked if inspections are being conducted regularly to ensure compliance, the director general threw his hands in the air and said he "does not have enough qualified personnel and resources to conduct routine or surprise inspections."

Ports Not Ready to Prevent Nuclear Material Smuggling

¶ 16. (C) According to the NNRA, none of the seaports and airports in Nigeria are equipped with Portal Radiation Monitors (PRM) to detect the movement of radioactive sources and nuclear materials in and out of the country. The Nigerian Customs Services, Immigration, Police, and Department of State Service personnel are neither trained nor equipped to detect and identify such materials. As an example, Elegeba described a 2004 case in which a consignment of spent radioactive material was shipped out of the country through an unauthorized airport without proper labeling, although initial authorization was issued for shipping the material through a designated airport. The shipment was later caught in Europe. According to Elegeba, the consignment escaped because Nigerian Customs lacks detection equipment and the labeling was wrong. (Note: The case was successfully prosecuted in Nigeria, where the involved companies were fined and two staff members were convicted. End Note) Similarly, Shell Petroleum Development Company (SPDC) and Western Atlas International Nigeria Limited (a service provider of the

former) on November 13, 2008 were found guilty (and are awaiting sentencing) for the loss of Category 5 (cesium 137) and Category 4 (Am-Be) sources while in the custody of the SPDC. The missing sources have still not been recovered.

¶7. (C) Elegeba commented that the Nigerian Police, the Department of State Service, Customs, Immigration, and other GON agencies with overlapping responsibilities for the security of radioactive sources should integrate nuclear safety and security in the curriculum of their respective training schools. He said the NNRA will be pushing for this through the inter-ministerial Committee on Nuclear Security and Radiological Emergency. He also said that ports of entry should be fitted with basic radiation detection instruments. (Comment: The fact that various GON services representatives received the DOE training for the first time is a positive step. However, the fact that there is no GON plan to start equipping ports with PRM is troubling. End Comment)

Nigeria's Nascent Nuclear Program

¶8. (C) As pointed out in Elegeba's speech at the inauguration of the training, Nigeria has a nascent nuclear program for power generation under the authority of the Nigerian Atomic Energy Commission (NAEC). A recent press report indicated that the NAEC has drafted a framework for the deployment of nuclear electricity. Two NNRA regulated nuclear research facilities - the Center for Energy Research and Training (CERT) at Ahmadu Bello University in Zaria and the Center for Energy Research and Development (CERD) at Obafemi Awolowo University in Ile-Ife are believed to be conducting rudimentary and basic nuclear research (Reftel A). Elegeba indicated that the NNRA has under its control a storage depot for orphaned and legacy sources at the CERT facility in Zaria.

Comment

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¶9. (C) Nigeria is aspiring to be a nuclear power for the purpose of power generation. Press reports and unconfirmed rumors about a visit by an Iranian delegation in September to explore possible nuclear collaborations are further indications that Nigeria is exploring possibilities for developing nuclear power to address its severe electricity shortages. In a conversation with ESTHOFF, the Director General of the Nigerian Energy Commission (NEC), without confirming the Iranian visit stated his recommendations to the GON that collaboration with Iran will not be advisable both because of possible negative repercussions from the international community as well as due to doubts about Iranian capabilities to deliver the technology.

¶10. (C) The DOE-funded search and secure training and the donation of radiation detection equipment helped enhance the capabilities of the NNRA and several security organizations that have responsibility for safeguarding and securing radioactive sources and materials in Nigeria. The GON needs to build on this by integrating nuclear search and rescue training into the curricula of the security organizations as well as by equipping its ports and airports with radiation detection equipment. Nigeria's ambitions to develop nuclear power should be predicated on a much more strengthened and competent NNRA to ensure Nigeria's ambitions are consistent with its international commitments on the use of nuclear power for peaceful purposes.

¶11. This cable was coordinated with Consulate Lagos.

SANDERS